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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents background information and descriptions of Bulgarian national costumes. The document is part of an ethnic heritage unit intended for use by elementary and secondary social studies classroom teachers as they develop and implement cultural awareness educational programs on Bulgaria. Costumes from 11 Bulgarian regions are discussed, including the capital city of Sophia, the Pirin region, the central Rhodope mountains, West and East Thrace, Dobrudzha, Strandzha, and North Bulgaria. For each region, information is presented on comparison of men's and women's costumes; ceremonial uses of the costumes; detailed description of costume construction, appearance, and embroidery; and jewelry worn with costumes for everyday and/or ceremonial use. Pictures of each costume are included in the original document. The document concludes with a glossary of costume terms in the English and Bulgarian languages. (DB)

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BULGARIANS

COSTUMES

Selected by
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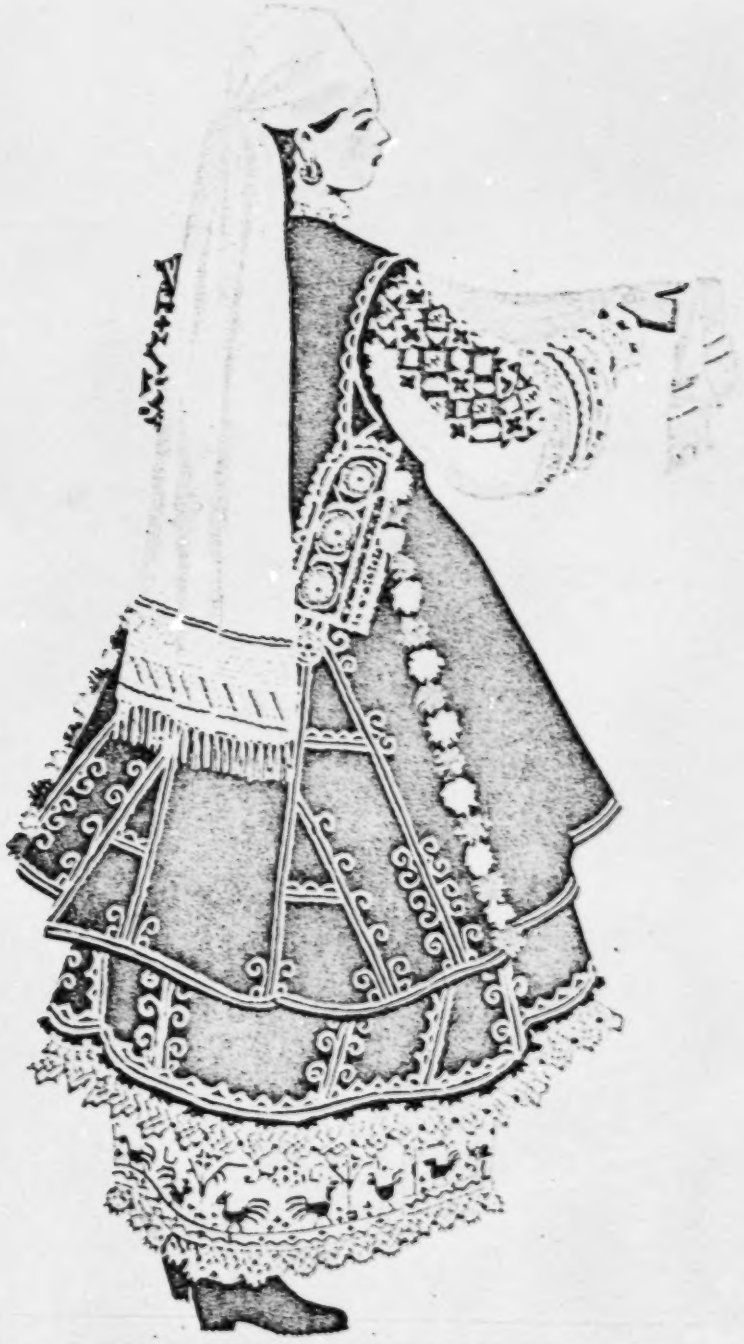

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THE SHOPE COSTUME FROM THE REGION AROUND THE CAPITAL CITY OF SOFIA

This is probably the best and most widely known costume of the Bulgarian people. It is from the western region of Bulgaria and is found in wide variety in the region immediately surrounding the capital city of Sofia.

As in most parts of Bulgaria, the woman's costume is a little more ornate than the men's, even though it is made of basically the same materials. The head-covering, or "krpa," is a plain white head-scarf carefully covering the hair and with a part of it hanging low over the back. There is a sleeveless tunic, or "soukman," with a wide round neckline which is worn over an ankle length white cotton chemise. This chemise is decorated at the lower edge of the sleeve and hem with a small band of geometric embroidery, or as in recent times, replaced with lace edging.

The tunic, or "soukman," is low cut and is decorated in the front and sleeves with white curly patterns and like the man's vest can be either black or blue. There is always a belt, usually woven, with or without metal buckles.

The ever present "tsurvouli" made of leather are used as footwear.

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A WOMAN'S COSTUME FROM THE AREA OF GOTSE DELCHEV IN THE PIRIN REGION

The Pirin region of Bulgaria is located in the southwest corner of the country and has many hills and mountains. There is a strong Macedonian influence here.

Here, in this region, the woman's costume occurs with a tunic called the "saya." This is similar to the "soukman" except that it opens in the front, usually has sleeves, and is knee length. It is worn over a tunic shaped chemise.

The "saya" from the Gotse Delchev area is typical of the Pirin region. It is made of plain white or navy cotton material, the sleeves are short, the skirt is slightly flared and comes to just above the knee. It is embroidered at the upper front edges and at the bottom of the sleeves. The sash and apron are mostly red with plant motifs or geometric designs woven into the apron.

The white headpiece frames the face of the woman and is trimmed with red and black embroidery. The chemise carries a similar embroidery on the bodice, the sleeves and on the hem. Colorful stockings, or "chorapi," are worn up to the knee and fit neatly into the customary "tsurvouli."

A "saya" with long open sleeves and made of red or navy striped material is also found in the Pirin region. Women's headdresses, which are necessary in many Bulgarian costumes, are often adorned with gold Turkish coins or other forms of jewelry.

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A COUPLE FROM THE CENTRAL RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

The general tone color of the Rhodope national dress is dark.

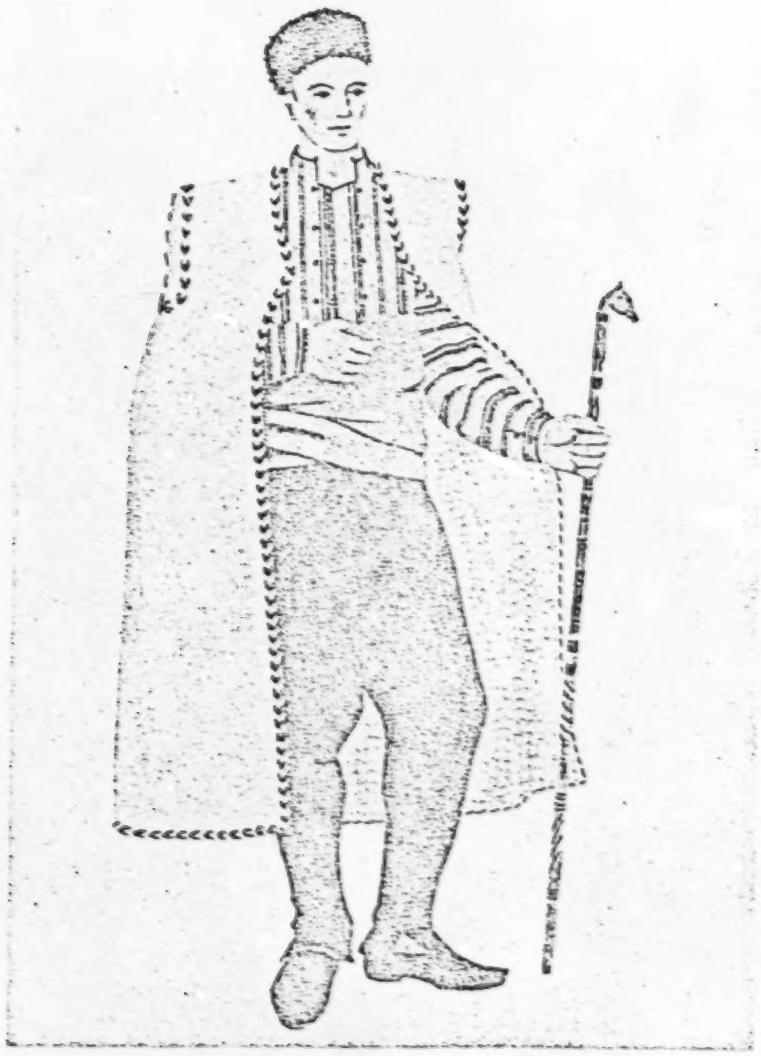
Here, the man is dressed in a light chocolate brown, woolen costume with black braid trim called "gaitani." This man's dress is known as "cherno-dreshen," or a dark costume. The pants are typical of the region being dark colored and with a wide cut looseness in the seat of the pants. The pants generally are tight fitting below the knee to the ankle. Leather "tsurvouli," or shoes, are worn. A white shirt is tucked into the pants and a wide red sash is wound around the middle. He wears a "kalpak," or black fur hat upon his head.

The woman wears a long-sleeved, woolen navy blue "saya," or tunic, decorated at the hem and lower sleeves with metal thread. Over this is a long-sleeved navy jacket with similar decorations. A rather plain white blouse is worn under the tunic. One apron is worn, this being basically yellow with red and green stripes in a box plaid pattern. The sash is generally red with stripes of darker colors. On the head is worn a large, flower printed, fringed scarf wrapped around the forehead and tied in back of the head. Woolen slippers are decorated in the same manner as the tunic and jacket.

The total image of this costume has a strong Greek flavor.

WOMAN'S DRESS FROM THE AREA OF GABROVO

The woman's dress is primarily the long black "soukman" which flows down to the ankles. There is a wide band of decoration at the hem. Note the absence of an apron in this dress, but the addition of a winter fur-lined long jacket. A very full and highly ornamented headpiece, wrapped around the head and shoulders is in sharp contrast to the rest of the costume.



MAN'S DRESS FROM THE AREA OF CHIRPAN

The man's costume reflects the "chernodreshen" type of costume in the fact that it is generally dark, not white in color. He wears the usual fur hat, or "kalpak," on his head. His pants are loose fitting around the waist and seat but become tight fitting from the knees down to the ankles. His jacket is red and black striped (as are many women's "soukman") while his wide sash is red. Over his shoulders is a rather plain white woolen shepherd's cloak.

WOMEN'S DRESS FROM EAST THRACE
THE DISTRICT OF SLIVEN

The eastern part of the country of Bulgaria, that central part between Dobrudzha and Strandzha, is known as Eastern Thrace. There is a mountain range that goes from the western part of Bulgaria and ends in eastern Thrace. There are also beautiful valleys and plains areas.

As in most parts of the country, the woman"s dress has the ever-present "soukman." Here, in this area, the "soukman" can be made of a solid, striped, or even plaid material. Unlike in Shope, where it is directly embroidered or has cord decorations, the Thracian "soukman" has a band of decoration at the neckline and hem. This decoration can be of various widths, colors, patterns and usually of appliques of wool, felt, ribbon or embroidery.

Sometimes plain white headscarves are worn while in some areas (as in the case here) a sort of crown is worn on the head with a long white flowing length of material hanging down below the waist. There is woven embroidery and sometimes lace along the hem of the very full headscarf.

Usually a geometrically designed apron and a woven or metal belt is worn over the "soukman." The stockings, or "chorapi," are generally white wool.

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WOMAN'S COSTUME FROM DOBRUDZHA

The upper northeast corner of the country of Bulgaria is known as Dobrudzha. There is some of the influence of the Danubian plain here for the Danube River forms the northern boundary of the country and region.

As in most of the northern parts of Bulgaria the "soukman" is prominent in this costume. The popular color here is red, made from plant dyes. This "soukman" is low cut in the front, sleeveless, and comes to just below the knees. There are small ornamental embroideries scattered over the "soukman" along with a rich white embroidery running along the hem. The usual white chemise is worn under the "soukman."

A bright yellow head-covering is used. This head scarf generally has very long fringe attached to it. One frontal apron is worn and it is usually dark blue or sometimes even black. The apron, or "pristilka," is abundantly covered with white braid ornamentation in both floral and geometric designs.

On the feet are usually worn white cotton or wool "chorapi," or stockings, while the foot covering itself is the traditional leather "tsurvouli."

THE NATIVE DRESS OF STRANDZHA

Strandzha is located in the southeastern corner of Bulgaria. It borders the country of Turkey. This is the region where dancers dance and walk over red-hot coals with their bare feet.

The man's costume is of the "chernodreshen" variety, that is, it is of dark colors. The vest, jacket, and pants are of wool dyed brown and trimmed with black "gaitani," or braids.

The woman's "soukman" is black with a closely embroidered red band at the hem, in oval designs. The same red color shows in the striped apron and in the plain woven sash.

Young married women will wear two or three "soukman" of different lengths at the same time. This woman's costume shows two "soukman," a white one underneath (the summer version) and the black one worn over it. The black "soukman" has its hem turned up to show the white "soukman" underneath. Beneath both of these "soukman" is worn a white, full-length chemise.

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THE WOMAN'S DRESS FROM NORTH BULGARIA WITH THE DOUBLE APRONS

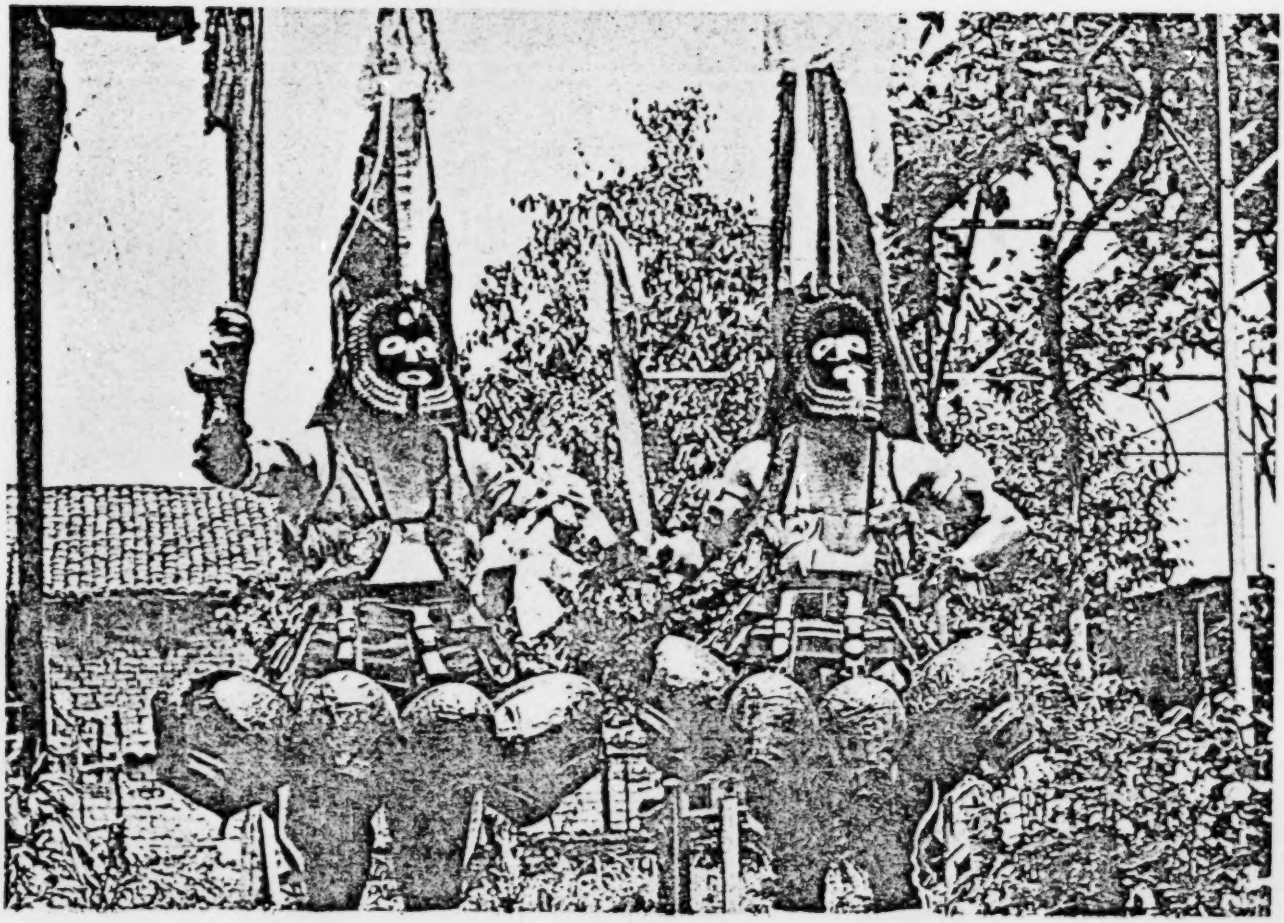
The double apron style of woman's costume occurs north of the Balkan Mountains in the Danubian plains and has many similarities to the Romanian styles across the Danube River border.

This is the original costume that the Slavic people brought with them when they came to the Balkans.

The costume from Gradishtse near Sevlievo is typical of this double apron style. The chemise is usually gathered at the neck, has raglan type sleeves (these are sleeves that continue in one piece to the collar so that there are no shoulder seams) in the west and tunic style in the eastern part.

The pleated back apron, the "bruchnik," can be completely striped as this one, or be solid with a border design at the hem only. It is fairly wide and gathered at the waist. Some "bruchniks" are fully pleated and are generally at least knee length. The front apron is typically a narrow straight rectangle, usually woven in horizontal designs and almost the same length as the chemise.

A vest is worn in this area but is not a necessary part of the two apron style.



KUKERI

"KUKERI" are male masked performers who perform ritual and magical functions. The Kukeri custom is usually observed during the first week of Lent. The Kukeri custom consists of two parts: the first involves going around the village, dancing in front of houses, wishing fertility to all and collecting presents; the second part is the ritual plowing and planting of the seed after which a blessing is pronounced, and everyone is wished a rich harvest, health, and many children. 21

LAZARKI

"LAZARKI" are girls who, on St. Lazarus' Day in the spring-time, (the day before Palm Sunday) go from house to house in the village, singing special songs, wishing all health and happiness, and participating in special dances. The girls are dressed in their best costumes, adorned with old jewelry and decorations handed down from mother to daughter, and in many places they wear very ornamental head-pieces.

A GLOSSARY
OF SOME COSTUME TERMS

KALPAK	a fur cap
TSURVOULI	footwear
PRESTILKA	front apron
SOUKMAN	a sleeveless tunic, closed in front
SAYA	a tunic with sleeves, open in front
POTOURI	men's full loose trousers reaching to the ankles
CHORAPI	stockings
ZHALETKA	man's vest
RIZA	man's shirt
BLUZA	a blouse
POYAS (opas)	man's belt or waistband wrapping - usually wide
KOLAN	woman's belt or just a belt
POLA	skirt
BRUCHNIK	pleated skirt
ULTANI	a coin necklace
BELODRESHEN	white clothes (men's) found mainly in the northwest corner of Bulgaria
CHERNODRESHEN	black, or dark clothes (men's) found mainly in the eastern half of Bulgaria
KUSANE	a technique of weaving colored thread directly into the cloth
BRANE	ornamentation which stands out in relief
KRPA	head scarf
GAITANI	rope-like braid used for decoration, particularly on men's costumes

BULGARIA
ROMANIA
NORTH WEST
BULGARIA
NORTH BULGARIA
DOBRUDZHA
BLACK SEA
YUGOSLAVIA
Balkan Mountains
SHOPE
WESTERN
THRACE
EASTERN
THRACE
STRANDZHA
PIRIN
RHODOPES
TURKEY
GREECE
България